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ABSTRACT

Although the teaching of English at Junior Certificate level in Malawi secondary schools has only recently been introduced, some problems have been created by the introduction of the prescribed textbook, "A New Introduction to English Literature." This report opens with a critical review of the textbook, citing certain irrelevancies in subject matter and pointing out areas of difficulty, such as vocabulary problems and topics incomprehensible to young students who do not share the background or viewpoints of the textbook authors. Questionnaires were submitted to teachers and students in 30 secondary schools, eliciting their attitudes about the use of the prescribed textbook. Responses revealed the following criticisms: (1) the difficulty level of the book is high; (2) the book is too divorced from the students' cultural background; (3) the addition of literature to the curriculum at this level is at the expense of teaching other needed language skills; (4) examinations (involving the book's contents) do not reflect the stated aims of the literature studies; and (5) there is a lack of continuity in the content of literature represented in the textbook and subsequent literature studies at a higher level. (JD)

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JAMES JOSUPHITE MSOSA:

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SUITABILITY AND RELEVANCE OF THE
PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE AT JUNIOR
CERTIFICATE LEVEL IN MALAWI SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

1982

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SUITABILITY AND RELEVANCE OF THE
PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE AT JUNIOR
CERTIFICATE LEVEL IN MALAWI SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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University of Nairobi
1982

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

John Hanson (1966) says that one of the most important insights of the new African nations is their clear recognition that education is the greatest instrument man has devised for his own progress. He points out however that education has not always been viewed this way. Hanson continues to say that all societies have education but the trail of human history is marked by the wreckage of those nations which have used their education merely to perpetuate what existed, those nations which have failed to recognise that forces of nature are hardest upon those that fail to move with them.

In many African countries today, especially after political independence, many educational systems are undergoing changes of varying degrees in their relentless quest for relevance. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the process, the creation of many educational organisations such as the Science Education Programme for Africa (SEPA), the African Curriculum Organization (ACO) etc. have come into being. The African Curriculum Organization has emerged to sponsor the joint training of specialists in Africa, to assist countries who wish to set up Curriculum Centres where they do exist, and, inter alia, to strengthen those which already exist with the ultimate aim of trying to identify Curriculum needs according to priorities in order to steer the nations towards straits of attainable and meaningful educational experiences so much needed in individual societies.

According to Mason (1959) education means training or fashioning the intellectual and moral qualities of the individual that he may be able and willing to acquire knowledge, and so turn it to its right use. It also means making him a good parent, a good neighbour, a good citizen or in short a good man. All this, says Mason, he cannot achieve without knowledge but neither will mere acquisition of knowledge confer on him these qualities. His morals as well as his intellectual powers must contribute to this great end, and the true fashioning of this purpose is right education.² Are our educational systems actually offering the needs of our pupils according to priorities? Are the systems providing the right education? This study will set to examine, among other things, the current situation in English Literature teaching at the Junior Certificate level in Malawi along these lines.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Malawi like most African countries under the British colonial rule, inherited an educational system which was based on the British type of education. In the colonial days education was generally conducted to train those who would serve the system and acquire certain values in the process. Through the education system an elite emerged which was widely separated in sympathies and aspirations from the stock from which the elite arose. After political independence the separation still persists and this has been intensified by the ethers of personal achievement, of competitive materialism deeply embedded in Western education. Even when the education was offered by missionary organisations, the curriculum was so geared to American and European concepts, that served to alienate the student further from his culture (Curle 1963)³ Retention

of this historical character of the education system could obviously be dysfunctional in any developing society hence the current swing towards curricula orientation and innovation.

Among the aims and objectives of Education in Malawi is the need to provide education that will stimulate in the individual, the initiative, confidence, resourcefulness and the sense of dedication so necessary in the development process. And while accepting the intrinsic values of education, that it leads to the full development of the individual's innate abilities and character, and that there is virtue in the search for knowledge for its own sake, it is clear that Malawi's aim is to provide education in conformity with the aspiration of the society and the national goals. The school, therefore, has a major responsibility in developing in individuals the basic values of society.⁴

One way of achieving this is to include the teaching of literature in our schools. Literature is one of the main vehicles for exploring our national and cultural heritage. Stories, folk tales and poems about the people, the places, the problems, the past and present of our own country provide pupils with an essential contact with their own cultural background.

TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN MALAWI SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Until the introduction of English Literature Paper III in June, 1977 (Circular letter Ref. No. SY 2/56) at Junior Certificate level in all Malawian Secondary Schools, English Literature was only taught at the Malawi Certificate of Education Level (M.C.E.). This certificate is equivalent to the Ordinary Level of the University of London General Certificate of Education.

It is undoubtedly, not without the best intention that the decisions to introduce English Literature at the Junior Certificate Level was taken. Since July, 1979, English literature has been an examination subject at the Junior Certificate Examination. A New Introduction to English Literature by D.J. May and L.A. Hill was prescribed for this purpose.

In the circular letter introducing the book, it was clearly stated that the prescribed book was too difficult for Form I pupils and that it should not be given to them. It was also stated that the formal study of Literature should begin in third term of Form I by considering the oral roots of Literature. The literature element in the new syllabus, therefore, covers only four terms. These terms include the third term of Form 1 and the three academic terms of Form 2.

A quick glance at the breakdown of what is supposed to be covered during the 12 weeks of the third term of Form I reveals that the first 6 weeks are to be devoted to the fireside stories, folk tales from other lands and songs of Malawi. The remaining 6 weeks are to be devoted to ballads from England and Scotland etc. Ballad and songs, Drama, comparison of oral and written forms and Problems of translation - in that order.

The first Form I class to study literature (oral) begun in April, 1978, and proceeded to study the prescribed book in Form 2 in October, 1978. The first examination on the new syllabus was in July 1979.

THE AIMS OF THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE LITERATURE

The aims of Junior Certificate Literature course in Malawi are given as follows:

1. Enjoyment,
2. An Introduction to the work of important writers,
3. Increasing knowledge and command of the English Language.

It is stated in the teachers notes accompanying the new syllabus that literature is about people, and people are interesting. However alien the work to be studied may seem, the teacher should always aim at bringing this interest out. Literature, even at this elementary level should be enjoyable. The teacher is also advised never to treat literature as a druggery, even where initial understanding is a real problem.

Referring to the text as an introduction to the work of important writers, it is stated (in the teacher's notes) that the extracts in the set book were not chosen because they were easy. On the contrary some of the extracts are very difficult. All the same the extracts have been chosen because of their literary value. It is also pointed out in the notes that many novels that are widely read today cannot be called literature at all because there is nothing of enduring worth in them whereas the set book, although mostly consisting of extracts, introduces pupils to some of the fine writings that established authors and poets have left. The teacher is, therefore, supposed to get his pupils to see that an introduction to literature is an introduction to a vast cultural heritage, a presentation of the finest written works (whether originally written in English or not) that mankind has produced. Consequently, as with everything of cultural importance each generation should receive it, preserve it, be enriched by it, add to it and pass it on to the next generation.*

Regarding the teaching of literature as one way of increasing knowledge and command of the English language, the teacher is informed that before his pupils can discuss what the author is saying, they should first understand the language of the author which is English in this case. It is also realised that the benefit accruing on the language side compensates for the work done on the vocabulary, structures, and idioms that the author uses. The teacher, it is said, will probably find that these benefits of language motivate his pupils more than the other two aims. The teacher is, therefore expected to turn these into good use. This is taking into consideration the fact that there is much slovenly and inaccurate use of language nowadays probably because of the influence of advertisements, bad journalism, trashy novels, etc. whereas literature remains a field where language is used as the precise and delicate instrument that it should be.⁵

THE PROBLEM

Although the teaching of English at Junior Certificate level has only recently been introduced, there are already some problems which apparently have been created because of the introduction of the prescribed text book, A New Introduction to English Literature by May and Hill.

It is cited for instance, in the teachers notes that the textbook is not only too difficult for Form 1 pupils, but also that even for Form 2 pupils some of the extracts are "quite hard". The text book which is the only one, in a series of five self-contained books, used in Malawian schools is supposed to provide a valuable introduction to English literature for students to whom English is the second language.

The level of difficulty of this text cannot be over-emphasized. After only one year of examination a circular letter from the Ministry of Education Headquarters (Ref. No. SY 2/50/159) was sent to all heads of secondary schools instructing them to amend the Junior Certificate English syllabus by excluding two chapters from the prescribed text. This was in addition to other two chapters which had been originally excluded from the same text book. How these decisions were arrived at, very little if anything is known except that it seems clear that consideration of the language competence of pupils at Junior Certificate level might have been taken into account.

Another dimension to the problem created by this new introduction is an apparent feeling among teachers of English that the prescribed book is rather too divorced culturally from the pupils' background particularly at this elementary level to be of much use. This is coupled with the fact that the language used in many, if not most, of the extracts is far beyond the competence of the pupils it is geared for.

Further to this is the feeling that there is already so much work to be covered at the Junior Certificate level and the addition of literature to the Curriculum is at the expense of teaching other language skills which are at the moment badly needed. It is also felt that the type of examination so far given does not in the least reflect any attempt to achieve the stated aims of literature. The questions set at the Junior Certificate examinations seem to be no more than a "prepared comprehension". (Jenkinson, ATEM page 19).

Finally, there is a clear lack of continuity in the type of literature provided at Junior Certificate level and that taught at the Malawi Certificate of Education level. For example while the Junior Certificate syllabus includes poetry (some of which is not the easiest) this aspect of literature is totally ignored for no apparent reason at the Malawi Certificate of Education level.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There seems to be lack of relevance in the Materials used in teaching literature at Junior Certificate level to the pupils needs and cultural background. There also seems to be a big gap in terms of continuity between Junior Certificate and M.C.E. Literature Materials. This has created a need for the development of a new literature approach that will bridge the gaps of relevance and continuity. The fact that A New Introduction to English Literature bears no relationship at all with the kind of literature books currently in use in Forms III and IV clearly indicates that there is obviously a need to relate the literature taught in Forms III and IV to that taught in Forms I and II. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to:

- (i) investigate the attitude of teachers towards the difficulty and appropriateness of the text-book.
- (ii) investigate the attitude of pupils towards the appropriateness and difficulty of the text-book.

(iii) assess the question of continuity in the Literature Materials taught at Junior Certificate and M.C.E. levels.

(iv) explore areas for further research along the same lines.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature as a subject is an area which has for a long time brought out controversial issues. People have asked questions concerning the nature of literature. What is literature? What should literature do? When does literature become relevant and to whom? Is there anything like African or European literature? Can an African appreciate what is essentially European, or American literature and vice versa? These are but only a few questions out of a multitude of questions that can possibly be asked about literature. The answers to these questions are not obvious. It is even more difficult when one has to narrow this broad area of literature to the classroom situation with all social and cultural differences in its setting as well as other pedagogic limitations.

Mayhead (1965) for example says about literature that it must or should be enjoyed, it should relax one by exercising, and bringing into play faculties of the mind that would otherwise be dormant. He also says that literature can take us out of the track of weary routine, by leading us to understand something of that whole vast body of human living in which our day-to-day concerns have their place.

On the other hand, he says that undue stress in differences of background between say, an African reader and a European lady-novelist can be exceedingly dangerous as it often imposes unnecessary obstacles to understanding. He also continues to say that a person

of average intelligence and tolerable literacy whatever his background, will generally be aware, however dimly, that human beings have a remarkable way of resembling one another, wherever they come from and that what is thought or felt vividly by any individual, real or fictitious, is unlikely to be without relevance for him.

This statement is significant in that it singles out the ability to appreciate literature on the basis of intelligence and literacy level both of which are at stake when we consider the pupils in our own context at Junior Certificate level. If it is true that pupils' cultural background cannot affect their ability to understand and appreciate literature of whatever kind then surely English literature as it is now taught in Malawi secondary schools at Junior Certificate level should pose no problem.

But considering the age of pupils at that level, their language competence and the fact that the textbook is culturally far removed from the pupils background, it is inevitable that the teaching of Literature should pose problems.

Chinua Achebe once said that no man can understand another whose language he does not speak, language being "a man's entire world view" (Emanyoni 1962).⁷ This statement is very important especially when one considers that Literature is one of the main vehicles for exploring our national and cultural heritage and that language serves as a means to this end. Language, cannot be divorced from culture.

When Ngugi wa Thiong'o said that what the African writers did for him in a way that no other English writer

could do for him was to make him feel that they were speaking to him, the situation about which they were writing was one which was immediate to him, and he also found for the first time, that he was talking with his own people. He was talking with characters whom he knew, characters, who in a way had agonies which he had seen with his own people in Kenya (Duerden and Pieterse 1972).⁸ What Ngugi means by this is that the African writers experiences are closer and more relevant to him than that of the English or European writer. This of course is inspite of the fact that the African writers wrote in English.

Moody says that literature is studied to develop a keener sense of values in those who gain an intimate acquaintance with it and that in general, students will most easily be attracted to works of literature in which they can quickly recognize a familiar background, preferably with characters somewhat similar to themselves or other people they know.⁹ This is, of course not to deny that studies in literature, if wisely undertaken, will bring us into contact with some of the world's greatest minds and personalities, the great teachers and thinkers of all ages. The question is: Is literature at Junior Certificate level wisely undertaken so as to be meaningful and relevant to the pupils background?

Through literature, both prose and poetry, children will be exposed to language that is used with skill and beauty. Experience with carefully chosen stories and poems will help children to explore and interpret human situations and to supplement and extend their own experiences. Literature which the child reads involves imaginations, feelings, and personal development. As such it may be considered as a very important part of

the English programme. Stories, folk tales and poems about people, places, problems of the past and present in our own country provide pupils with essential contact with their own cultural background. Experiences with literature, however, require most, if not all, of the basic comprehension skills. And in order for pupils to appreciate any selection chosen, these skills must be applied in a special way so that reading takes on new dimensions and new life.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT JUNIOR CERTIFICATE LEVEL IN MALAWI.

Not much has been written about the teaching of English Literature at Junior Certificate level in Malawi and few people have expressed their feelings and opinions through the Association of Teachers of English (ATEM) newsletter about the state of English Literature at this level. One of these is Rev. Fr. W. Jenkinson a secondary school teacher.

Rev. Fr. Jenkinson says in his article that he is now more convinced than ever before that the prescribed book is not what the students need at their stage of English Education and that it is more or less a luxury they cannot afford. Fr. Jenkinson feels strongly that the J.C. course has always been a crowded two years and that the addition of literature inevitably means some aspects of the existing work will have to be sacrificed.

Fr. Jenkinson also points out that the examination paper (1979) is in itself disappointing because it attempts nothing more than a "prepared comprehension"

type questions. And after citing examples of the questions he says that in the examination (1979) there is no question that calls for anything like a subjective response from the candidate. This, he feels, is not worth the time and effort teachers and pupils alike spend on the text because the objectives achieved at the end are so humble.

In conclusion Fr. Jenkinson, feels that the level of difficulty of the prescribed text is above the pupils ability. Quoting as an example, a passage taken from Charles Dickens' Bleak House with all its vocabulary items and difficult structures, he says, "any passage that needs a full period just for vocabulary and another one for comprehension must be beyond the level of children it is intended".

In another article on the same subject, Peter Wells (1980), also a secondary teacher, gives even a more detailed criticism of the prescribed textbook. In his analysis he says "A New Introduction to English Literature by D.J. May and L.A. Hill (Book I) is not, as every teacher of English in Malawi now knows, either easy or attractive."

Wells feels that since the text is supposed to be for students to whom English is a second language it manifests many weaknesses. The first thing he points out is that the editors should have selected their extracts from books or works that at least contain such words as Oliver Twist, Christmas Carol or one of Henry James' short stories instead of sending the pupils straight into works of 500 pages.

Wells says that there is lack of consideration as regards the criteria the editors used in selecting stories

in the text. Whereas the authors have written many stories of unsophisticated charm (Somerset Maugham) many of which are about simple people in what now are called developing countries, the editors chose to take those which demand a ready appreciation of the significance of say, caviare, champagne, asparagus, and things like drama in the Balkans (The Luncheon) none of which is explained in the passage.

The question he poses then is: how carefully have the passages been chosen? Another example that Wells gives is one selected from Bulwer's writings which is about only nineteen lines. Despite the shortness of the passage there is reference to 19th Century British Politics, a misleading quotation from Othello and there is also mention of an obscure English vessel which very few English people would be able to describe. Wells, therefore, wonders how much attention has been paid to the background of the readers for whom the book was intended. He questions whether the readers are supposed to appreciate such things as "fair eyes" (in passage 7), lips like "red roses" (in passage 13) and "honey coloured hair" (in passage 15). Consider these to be beautiful whereas "pale" in passage 15 is not. To him ignoring such problems is mere jingoism.

Looking at the end of the book, says Wells, is a list of some 640 words which pupils have to learn. This means that the pupil who is familiar with 3,275 headword vocabulary as indicated in the book will have to increase his vocabulary by 20% in order to read the book. The frequency of some of these words is so high that on the average a student may have to look up one word every two lines or every 25 words. This, excluding idiomatic expressions, construction and background constitutes a

major problem of understanding. Wells does not consider this either easy or attractive.

In the same vein, Wells points out that there does not seem to be any basis for drawing the list of 640 words as some of the words are so common that they do not need to be looked up. On the other hand, the list excludes certain words which one would have thought somewhat difficult. This brings in the question of the validity of what the headword vocabulary of 3,275 is all about. It would seem as if the headword method does not take into account the differences of culture, climate or background. Neither does it take into account idioms which, according to Wells, present more problems than big words. It is apparent that it takes no account of the fact that a common word may have meanings some of which are very rare and difficult.

Finally, Wells describes the introductions to the passages in the text as obscure as well as misleading. Picking two examples from passages 6 and 19 he points out that the introduction to passage 6 mentions that the poem referred to was written after Keats' visit to Scotland, implying that the poem is about Scotland whereas it is nothing of the sort. Similarly passage 19 says that there are a few observations of human behaviour in the passage. Surprisingly there is, at most, one - the last one in the passage.

Michael J. Murphy (1980) a lecturer in English at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, as an experiment, asked each of about 40 mature students taking a special Diploma in Education (to qualify them to teach in the Junior forms of the secondary schools) to attempt an evaluation of the prescribed book. This exercise was

done after the mature students had just completed a sixweek teaching practice exercise at various schools mainly in the southern region of Malawi. The general reaction of the student teachers who read the text was, in the main, hostile, Murphy finds it rather disturbing that opinion seems to be unanimous against the effectiveness of the text and suggests that it is time an investigation was done to find at least a more suitable anthology, taking the need of pupils and teachers alike into account.

In another article "Literature for Juniors - some new Possibilities" (ATEM p.21, 31) Murphy discusses at some length the possibilities of using new and better materials (texts) at the Junior Certificate level in English literature. In the course of his discussions he recommends two anthologies of poetry. (1) A Poetry Anthology for Junior Secondary Schools, edited by Rosina Umelo and (2) African Poetry for Schools (Book I and II), edited by Noel Nachin. In his concluding remarks Murphy feels that the whole question of the study of prose fiction extracts in junior forms is a controversial issue. In his opinion an informal study of a brief selection of poems is sufficient. He also feels that exercises in prose extracts, unless the teacher is dealing with senior forms, are usually little more than glorified comprehension exercises. It is in poetic forms, he adds, that literature has its origins. It is these origins we should be mainly concerned with when just introducing literature as a separate study.

It is apparent from the discussion above that the question of what constitutes appropriate literature is a controversial one. It is also clear that the introduction of A New Introduction to English Literature

by May and Hill for use as a prescribed text book at the Junior Certificate level has aroused some serious negative criticism from some teachers and educators. It is these criticisms that make the study of the prescribed text book for the Junior Certificate level worth Undertaking.¹⁰

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CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

A. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Two instruments were developed for data collection and these were:

- (i) A students' Questionnaire,
- (ii) A teachers' Questionnaire.

These instruments are attached to this paper as appendices.

The students' attitude questionnaire consisted of 15 items and the teachers' questionnaire consisted of 25 items.

The items in the students' questionnaire ranged from those requiring one word answers e.g. Yes/No answers as in items 1, 10, 13 of appendix (i), multiple choice, items as in items 1, 3, 12 and 14 and some items designed to elicit free responses like items 7, 18, 15 etc. Most of the items were designed to elicit responses which would reveal the pupils attitude towards the use of the prescribed text book and the teaching of literature in general. It can be observed, for instance, that items 4, 5, 6 and 7 required the students to list four passages in the book which they found difficult to understand and another four, which they found relatively easy. For each answer they were to give their reasons. In items 1 and 2 students required to state whether they considered English literature easy or difficult and give reasons explain why.

The teachers' questionnaire was developed along the same lines as the students' questionnaire. Most of the items were designed to elicit responses which would reveal their attitude towards the use of A New Introduction to English Literature by May and Hill as a prescribed text book at Junior Certificate level as well as the new syllabus and the accompanying teachers' notes for Form I pupils.

Items 4 and 5 for example (appendix (ii)), required the teachers to state whether they referred to 1970 teachers notes for Junior Certificate Literature and, to further state whether they found the notes helpful or not. In items 10, 15 and 16 they were required to comment on the relevance of the content of the literature taught at this level, to the background and appropriateness of the teachers' notes. In item 19, the teachers assessment of the language difficulty in the text is required.

B. RESPONDENTS

The target population in this research project was (a) Form II students and (b) teachers teaching English literature in Form II. The Form II population was chosen mainly because by the time the questionnaire was administered, they had covered the English Literature syllabus and were about to write their Junior Certificate examinations. They had, therefore, a better knowledge of the book than either the Form I students who had no idea of the book at all or the Form III students who might have forgotten quite a lot about the book.

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C. SELECTION OF TEACHERS

As shown in the table below (3.1) there are 54 secondary schools scattered throughout the country. Of the 54, 28 are Day Secondary Schools, 11 Boys Boarding Secondary Schools, 10 Girls Boarding Secondary Schools and the remaining 5 are Mixed Boarding Secondary Schools. 15 Day Secondary Schools were elected out of 28, 5 from each of the Boys and Girls Boarding Secondary Schools and all Mixed Boarding Secondary Schools were taken. This gave the total of 30 schools. The 54 schools are government and grant aided schools. The 30 schools chosen for the study therefore did not include any private secondary school. One teacher from each one of the 30 schools, teaching Junior Certificate English Literature was sent the teachers attitude questionnaire.

TABLE 3.1

Government and Grant Aided
Sec. Schools And No. of Teachers Selected

	Mixed Boarding	Girls Boarding	Boys Boarding	Day Schools	Total
No. of Schools	5	10	11	28	54
No. of Schools Selected	5	5	5	15	30

D. SELECTION OF STUDENTS

The selection of the students sample was based on proximity of the schools to the investigator's place of work. As shown in the table below (Table 3.2) there

were six schools involved. Of the six schools four had full boarding facilities whereas the remaining two had limited boarding facilities. Three of these were urban schools whereas the remaining three were rural. Of these schools (six) only two urban had three streams of the Form II class each stream with 40 students. The rest had two streams each with 40 students per stream. All schools, therefore, had a total enrollment of 560 students who responded to the students attitude questionnaire.

TABLE 3.2 COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOLS
AND STUDENTS SELECTED

SCHOOL	TYPE	SITUATION	NO. OF STUDENTS
A	Mixed +	Urban	120
B	Girls ++	Urban	120
C	Boys ++	Urban	80
D	Girls ++	Rural	80
E	Boys ++	Rural	80
F	Boys +	Rural	80
6			560

+ Limited Boarding facilities

++ Full Boarding facilities

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E. ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

(i) The teachers' questionnaire was mailed to the respective schools. A covering letter addressed to the Heads of schools on the sample was sent together with the questionnaire.

(ii) The students' questionnaire was administered under supervision by the researcher during normal teaching hours. No time limit was set but most students managed to answer all the questions within a time span of 45 minutes. All questionnaires were collected immediately after completion and response was recorded at 100% as opposed to the mailed questionnaire where 20 teachers responded out of 30 by the time this research was being compiled. About six weeks passed before the analyses of the mailed questionnaire commenced.

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CHAPTER IV

A. ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARDS THE DIFFICULTY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TEXT-BOOK.

Four issues contained in the questionnaire provided the basis for valuating the attitude of teachers towards the prescribed text-book under study. The four issues were:

- (i) Usefulness of teachers notes.
- (ii) Relevance of the text-book.
- (iii) Level of difficulty of the language in the text.
- (iv) Schemes of work.

- (i) Usefulness of the Teachers Notes: Two items i.e. 4 and 5 of the questionnaire provided information on the usefulness of the teachers notes accompanying the new English Literature Syllabus for Junior Certificate.

TABLE 4.1
Teachers' Reference to Notes

	NO	%
YES	7	35
NO	12	60
SOMETIMES	1	5
TOTAL	20	100

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Table 4.2

Teachers' Attitude Towards the Usefulness of Teachers' Notes

	No. of Ts	%
Very Useful	6	30
Not Very Helpful	5	25
Useless	1	5
Have not Seen Them	8	40

Ts = TEACHERS

Table 4.1 shows that out of 20 teachers who responded to the questionnaire i.e. 66% of the sample selected, 7 (35%) referred to the notes, 12 (60%) made no reference to the notes and 1 (5%) sometimes referred to the teachers notes.

Table 4.2 shows that out of the 20 teachers, 6 teachers (30%) found the notes very useful, 5 teachers (25%) did not find the notes very helpful, 1 teacher (5%) found the notes useless whereas 8 teachers (40%) did not know the existence of such notes.

It is clearly indicated in Table 4.2 that about 30% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire did not find the notes helpful because they found the content of the notes not appropriate. It is also a significant thing to see that 40% of the teachers had not actually seen the notes. This also explains why there is a high percentage in Table 4.1 which made no reference to teachers' notes. The 60% that made no reference to

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teachers notes undoubtedly includes those teachers that had not seen the teachers notes.

(ii) Relevance of the Text-Book: One item i.e. 10 provided information on the relevance of the text-book to the pupils background.

TABLE 4.3

Teachers' Attitude Towards The
Relevance of the Text Book

	NO. OF Ts	%
RELEVANT	6	30
PARTLY RELEVANT	12	60
IRRELEVANT	2	10
TOTAL	20	100

Table 4.3 shows that 6 out of 20 teachers found the content in Junior Certificate English Literature relevant to pupils background, 12 found the content only partially relevant and 2 found the content completely irrelevant. The 30% of teachers who found the book relevant gave their reason as being that the book covers a wider horizon of literature which the pupils must be made to appreciate. The remaining 70% rejected the book on grounds of cultural differences and the fact that it was rather an absurd collection of difficult extracts, too foreign, with many ideas outside pupils experience.

(iii) The Level of Difficulty of the Text Book:
One item i.e. 19 of the questionnaire provided information on the level of difficulty of the text.

TABLE 4.4

Teachers Attitude Towards The Level of
Difficulty of the Text Book

EASY/DIFFICULT	VERY DIFFICULT	TOO DIFFICULT	MANAGEABLE	TOTAL
0	6	8	1	5
0%	30%	40%	5%	25%
				100%

Out of 20 teachers not a single one found the level of language easy. 6 teachers found it difficult, 8 teachers found it very difficult, 1 teacher rated it too difficult whereas 5 teachers rated the level manageable. It is important to note that which only one teacher rated the language level too difficult, 70% rated the book difficult and very difficult against 25% who rated it manageable.

(iv) Form I Schemes of Work: Two items i.e. 15 and 16 of the questionnaire provided information on the teachers opinion about the Form I schemes of work as stipulated in the teachers notes.

TABLE 4.5

Teachers Opinion About the Form I
Schemes of Work

APPROPRIATE	4	20%
INAPPROPRIATE	7	35%
NOT SURE	1	5%
DIN'T SAY	8	40%
TOTAL	20	100%

Table 4.5 shows that only 20% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire thought that the Form I schemes of work were appropriate as against 35% who found schemes inappropriate for Form I. As in Table 4.2 40% had no knowledge of the existence of such notes.

The 20% who found the Form I schemes of work appropriate stated among other that the schemes were appropriate because they were a systematic guideline for the basis of literature, they provided a structured frame work for a teacher to work from. The schemes begin from the known unfolding to the unknown. On the other hand those who found the notes inappropriate stated that there is too wide a gap between Form I work and Form II literature. They also stated that the work planned for weeks 9-10 was difficult to explain to Form I, vague, dry and that there are no references for the Ballads from other lands.

B. ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE TEXT BOOK

Two issues contained in the students' questionnaire provided the basis for valuating the attitude of students towards the level of difficulty of the prescribed text book. The two issues were: -

- (i) Their general assessment of the text book.
- (ii) Whether they understood the stories easily in the text book.

(i) Their General Assessment of the Text Book:
Two items i.e. 1 + 2 of the questionnaire provided information on the pupils general assessment of the level of difficulty of the text book.

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TABLE 4.6

Table Showing Students Attitude Towards
The Textbook By School and No. of Students

SCHOOL	TYPE	SITUATION	NO. OF S.	SAMPLE CHOSEN	EASY	DIFF.	TOTAL
A	Mixed +	Urban	120	30	8	22	30
B	Girls ++	Urban	120	30	7	23	30
C	Boys ++	Urban	80	20	2	18	20
D	Girls ++	Rural	80	20	10	10	20
E	Boys ++	Rural	80	20	7	13	20
F	Boys +	Rural	80	20	1	19	20
			560	140	35	105	140

As shown in Table 3.2 there were 560 students who completed the questionnaire. Out of these only 140 students' questionnaires were analysed. These were picked at random and were distributed as indicated in table 4.6 under the column - CHOSEN SAMPLE. Out of 140 students only 35 students stated that they found the text easy. The trend of various schools can be seen comparably well in columns 6 and 7.

(ii) Ability to Understand Stories in the Book:

One item i.e. 15 of the questionnaire provided information on whether the students understood the extracts in the book without any problem. They were also required to make any relevant comments on the book. Item 15 more or less reflected on what the students said in item 2 of the questionnaire where they were required to comment why they found the text book easy or difficult. The findings are summarised in the table below:

TABLE 4.7

Table Showing Students Attitude Towards
The Text Book by Their Remarks

	A	B	C	D	E	F		%
NEED TO SIMPLIFY	16	17	11	2	10	8	64	45.72
NO PROBLEM WITH TEACHER'S HELP	4	3	3	4	2	1	17	12.14
NEED TO REPLACE SOME PASSAGES	1	0	1	2	1	1	6	4.29
NEED TO LEAVE OUT SOME PASSAGES	1	0	0	3	0	1	5	3.57
NEED FOR SOMETHING AFRICAN	0	0	3	0	5	2	10	7.14
NO REMARKS	5	10	1	9	2	4	31	22.14
NEED TO REPLACE BOOK	3	0	1	0	0	3	7	5.00
T O T A L	30	30	20	20	20	20	140	100

In the table above it can be seen that the majority of the students remarked that there was need to simplify the text. Those students who indicated that they had no problems using the book gave their reason as being adequate teachers explanation. These make up only 12% of the total sample. What is perhaps more important is that a number of issues were raised in the students

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remarks. Some students expressed the need to replace some passages in the text while others suggested that certain passages should be left out without necessarily replacing them. "The Ghost's Walk" featured most in the students remarks who suggested that some passages should be removed from the text. There were also some students who felt that if literature was to be something enjoyable then there was need to have something African in the Junior Certificate syllabus and that this would make it easier for them to study M.C.E. literature without any problems.

C. ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUITY IN THE LITERATURE MATERIALS TAUGHT AT JUNIOR CERTIFICATE AND M.C.E. LEVELS.

One issue in the questionnaire provided the basis for valuating the question of continuity in the literature materials taught at Junior Certificate and M.C.E. levels. The issue was whether teachers thought Junior Certificate English Literature was a good introduction to M.C.E. literature.

Two items i.e. 13 and 14 of the questionnaire provided information on whether there was any continuity in English literature at the two levels.

TABLE 4.8

Table Showing Teachers' Responses on Whether There is Continuity in Literature At J.C. and MCE Levels

	NO. OF Ts	%
YES	6	30
NO	13	65
NO IDEA	1	5
TOTAL	30	100

As shown in the table above the Majority of teachers i.e. 65% had the opinion that there was no continuity at all in the literature taught at the two levels.

Those who indicated that there was continuity between the literature taught at Junior Certificate level and that taught at M.C.E levels gave the following reasons for their answer.

- (i) The difficult language motivates the pupils to work hard.
- (ii) It forms a good basis for literary appreciation.
- (iii) Study of characterization starts at this level.

On the other hand those who felt that there isn't such a thing as continuity at the two levels gave the following reasons:

- (i) The literature at Junior Certificate level lacks sufficient material to expose theme, plot and characterization. That is why only four passages which are complete stories in themselves are enjoyed by students.
- (ii) There is little or no cross transfer of ethical questions.
- (iii) The Junior Certificate and M.C.E. English literature syllabuses are treated as different entities.
- (iv) Skills needed at M.C.E. level are not promoted by the kind of questions that are used at Junior Certificate level.

- (v) Unlike the literature at M.C.E. level, the literature at Junior Certificate level is dry, rarely amusing and there is hardly any enjoyment because of the cultural barrier in the content.
- (vi) At Junior Certificate level there is an attempt to introduce poetry to pupils whereas poetry is completely neglected at M.C.F. level.

These were some of the above things that were brought up in the teachers' questionnaire on the continuity in the literature taught at the two levels.

D. POSSIBILITIES OF EXPLORING AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ALONG THE SAME LINES.

One item in the questionnaire i.e. 20 provided information regarding the type of questions that teachers frequently used in their literature teachings and assessment. In this item teachers were required to select the type of question in which their students performed best. The table below shows the frequency in which the teachers appeared.

TABLE 4.9
Table Showing Questions in Which
Students Perform Best

A	Multiple Choice Questions	2
B	Filling in the Blanks	5
C	Completing Sentences	11
D	Essay Type Questions	3
E	A, B, C	2

It is clear from the table that most teachers used C in their tests. This had the highest frequency. Some teachers used a combination of several types of questions. This is suggestive of the kind of questions that are actually given during the Junior Certificate English Literature examinations. It seems very unlikely that teachers would want to give their students what is not examined as the students performance is likely to suffer.

Junior Certificate Literature has been examined since 1979 and there are four examination papers ' date. A closer examination of the style of questioning in these papers would perhaps reveal the weakness or strength of the examination system.

Teachers have in the past heavily criticized ^{the} kind of questions that are used at Junior Certificate level as also revealed in section C of this chapter. Apparently teachers are doing nothing to remedy the situation. Could this be as a result of the gap that exists between the teacher and those who are responsible for the preparation of the syllabus. Or could it be the kind of literature that is offered at that level ~~that~~ offers no room for improvement.

These are some of the issues that would be worth looking into apart from those already raised else where in this research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. SUMMARY

It has already been stated in the opening Chapter that there are some problems which have been created because of the introduction of the prescribed text book, A New Introduction to English Literature by May and Hill. This is inspite of the fact that the book has only recently been introduced.

Among other things there are four issues associated with the introduction of the book which one source of constant criticism from teachers and educators alike. These are:-

- (i) The level of difficulty of the text book.
- (ii) The feeling that the book is rather culturally too divorced from the pupils background.
- (iii) The feeling that the addition of literature to the curriculum is at the expence of teaching other language skills at the moment badly needed at that level and that the type of examination so far given does not reflect any attempt to achieve the stated aims of literature.
- (iv) The feeling that there is lack of continuity in the content of literature taught at Junior Certificate level and that taught at H.C.E. level.

In the investigation, which was carried out in order to determine the validity of the claims made against the introduction of the text book in the Junior Certificate English syllabus, the following procedure was followed:

Two instruments for data collection were developed. These were a students' questionnaire and a teachers' questionnaire. These questionnaires consisted of 15 and 25 items respectively. The items in the students' questionnaire were designed to elicit responses which would reveal the pupils attitude towards the use of the prescribed text book and the teaching of literature in general. The items in the teachers' questionnaire were designed along the same lines i.e. most items were designed to elicit responses which would reveal their attitude towards the use of the prescribed text book at Junior Certificate level as well as the usability of the new syllabus and accompanying teachers notes.

The target population as stated in Chapter III was Form II students and teachers teaching Junior Certificate English literature. The selection of the students was based on the proximity of the schools to the investigator's place of work. On the other hand the selection of teachers depended on the number of schools selected from the total number of 54 Government and Grant aided secondary schools. Thirty schools were chosen and one teacher from each of the thirty schools was sent the teachers attitude questionnaire.

The composition of the thirty schools was as follows: 15 Day Secondary Schools, 5 Boys Boarding Secondary schools, 5 Girls Boarding Secondary Schools, and 5 Mixed Boarding Secondary Schools.

The teachers' questionnaire was mailed to the respective schools with a covering letter addressed to the Heads of schools. The students' questionnaire was administered under supervision by the researcher during normal teaching hours and was collected immediately after completion.

B. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS:

There were some major limiting factors to this research which cannot be overlooked.

Lack of enough time to carry out a thorough research and financial constraints definitely limited both the scope and depth of the study. The validity of any conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study can, therefore, only be seen in the light of the limiting factors referred to above.

The purpose of this study, as cited in Chapter I, was to investigate the attitude of both students and teachers towards the level of difficulty and appropriateness of the text book, to assess the question of continuity in the literature materials used at Junior Certificate and N.C.E. levels and finally, to explore areas for further research.

The findings as outlined Chapter IV clearly indicate that both teachers and students have generally a negative attitude towards the use of the prescribed text book. It is also apparent that many teachers are not aware of the presence of the teachers notes that came with the introduction of the prescribed text book for Junior Certificate English Literature. For those who are aware, most of them consider the notes, particularly the schemes of work for Form I, inappropriate (appendix iii).

70% of the teachers rejected the book as not being relevant on grounds of cultural differences (Table 4.3). Regarding the level of difficulty, only 25% of the teachers rated the book manageable. No one thought the text book easy. The linguistic and cultural content of the text book may therefore be considered as major factors influencing the teachers attitude towards the use of the prescribed textbook.

Out of 140 students whose questionnaires were analysed, only 35 thought the book easy. Most of the students thought the book needed simplifying (Tables 4.6 and 4.7 respectively).

The question of continuity as discussed on pages 31, 32 and 33 shows that there were more teachers whose opinion was that there was no continuity at all in the literature taught at the two levels. Fewer reasons were also given by those who claimed that there was continuity at these levels. It is interesting, for example, to note that at Junior Certificate level there is an attempt to introduce the study of poetry and that this aspect of literature is totally neglected by not including it in the literature syllabus at M.C.E. level. It would be worthwhile to find out why there is this discrepancy in the literature syllabuses at the two levels.

Although some of the issues were not investigated due to the limiting factors already given above and although the investigated issues could have been much more exhaustively discussed in order to bring up more conclusive evidence from the study, it is clear from the findings that there is something wrong with the present Junior Certificate syllabus.

A thorough investigation, particularly of what would be linguistically and culturally suitable for Junior Certificate English Literature would help bring up recommendations which would be very useful in the event of the literature syllabus being revised. Such a study or investigation would also make recommendations to the Junior Certificate and M.C.E. syllabus committees to examine the question of continuity in the subject matter taught at these levels. This, it is hoped would result in at least some goals, the education system in the country has set itself, being achieved.

Appendix (i)

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE
TEACHING:

TICK THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER IN THE SPACES PROVIDED AND
WRITE DOWN YOUR ANSWERS IN THE SPACES PROVIDED:

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

1. Is English your teaching subject?
Yes.....
No.
2. For how long have you taught English in Secondary
Schools?
3. How many periods of English Literature do you teach
per week?
.....
4. Do you refer to the 1979 Teachers' Literature notes
for J.C.E.?
- Yes.
No.
5. How useful do you find the notes?
Very useful
Not very helpful
Useless.
6. How do you evaluate your students performance?
By giving them past papers
By preparing own questions
By following the questions in the text.
or
.....
.....

7. Do you set specific objectives for every chapter you cover?
Yes
No.
8. If the answer is Yes how do you ensure that the objectives are achieved.
.....
.....
.....
9. What is the general attitude of your students to the study of Literature?
Indifferent
Earnest
Enthusiastic
Alert
I don't know.
10. What is your comment on the relevance of the content in the J.C.E. Literature to the pupils background?
.....
.....
.....
.....
11. Has your school got sufficient text books in Literature?
Yes.
No.
12. Do you also teach M.C.E. Literature classes?
Yes.
No.
13. Do you consider J.C. English Literature a good introduction to M.C.E. English Literature?
Yes.
No.
14. Give two reasons for your answer
.....
.....
.....

15. What is your opinion of the Third Term Schemes of work for Form I Introduction to English literature as stipulated in the teachers notes?

- a) Appropriate
- b) Inappropriate
- c) I am not sure

16. Give one or two reasons for your answer in No. 15.

.....
.....
.....
.....

17. Name any four passages that you find most difficult to explain in your class.

.....
.....
.....
.....

18. Which passages do your pupils find most enjoyable? Put down any four.

.....
.....
.....
.....

19. How do you rate the level of language difficulty in the text?

- Easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult
- Too difficult
- Manageable.

20. My students perform best in

- Multiple Choice question
- Filling in the blanks
- Completing sentences
- Essay type question.

21. Do you have any sources apart from the text to help you in your teaching of the text.
- Yes.
- No.
22. If the answer is Yes, what are these sources and how useful are they?
- a)
- b)
- c)
23. What skills, in your opinion, do examinations set to examine/assess in the students?
- a) ability to recall
- b) general comprehension skills
- c) ability to analyse a passage critically
- d) literary appreciation?
24. In your opinion do you find the examinations
- a) appropriate?
- b) inappropriate?
- c) you are not sure.
25. Do you consider the number of periods allocated to Literature teaching in Form II adequate to cover the text?
- Yes.
- No.

If you have any other remarks you would like to make please put them in the space provided.

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Appendix (ii)

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE ON J.C. ENGLISH LITERATURE

INSTRUCTIONS: TICK THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER OR WRITE DOWN
YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACES PROVIDED.

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

1. I consider English Literature
 - a) Easy
 - b) Difficult
2. I find Literature (Easy)(difficult) because
.....
.....
.....
.....
3. How often are you given exercises and assignments in
Literature
 - a) Very often
 - b) sometimes
 - c) rarely
 - d) not at all
4. Of the passages that you have done, which ones did
you find most difficult to understand?

Name four in order of difficulty.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
5. Of the passages that you have done which ones did
you find easy to understand?

- 48 -
5. Name four in order of preference
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 6. Give two reasons why you found the passages listed under question 4 difficult.
 - a)
 - b)
 7. Give two reasons why you found the passages listed under question 5 easy
 8. Do you have any sources apart from your literature text book which help you in your literature studies?
Yes
No
 9. Name the sources if the answer is yes.
.....
.....
 10. Do you find the sources very useful?
Yes
No.
 11. If the answer is Yes give one reason to support it.
.....
.....
 12. What kind of questions does your teacher often give you?
 - a). multiple choice
 - b) filling in the blanks
 - c) both (a) and (b)
 - d) essay type of questions

13. Did you study English Literature in Form I
- Yes.
- No.
14. What method does your teacher use in the teaching of literature?
- a) He simply reads the passages and we answer questions at the end of each chapter.
 - b) He explains to the class in detail before we answer questions.
 - c) We do silent reading before answering questions at the end of the chapter.
 - d) We normally have class discussions before answering questions on each passage.
15. Do you find it easy to understand the stories in your Literature text? Give reasons for your answer.

.....

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.....

If you have any remarks you would like to make please write them on the spaces provided.

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Appendix (iii)

SCHEME OF WORK (12 WEEKS ONE LESSON A WEEK)

WEEK	TOPIC	DETAILS
1	Introduction to Oral Literature	What people do in their free time tell stories, riddles, sing, dance. Different kinds of fireside stories. Different kinds of songs.
2	The Fireside Story	When told, who, why, audience composition, chorus; informal; nature of language used, (figurative etc.), meaning; songs incorporated.
3	The Fireside story (cont.)	Plots: action between animal and animal; man and animal; man gods, etc. Stories of origins of things (e.g. why pig has an ugly mouth. <u>Sources:</u> (1) Pupils with their own stories and tell the best ones, (2) Tales of Old Malawi. (Malawian Writers Series).
4	Folk Tales from Other Lands	Read (preferably tell) suitable folk tales on fairy stories from England and other countries. Similarities with Malawian stories Plots, nature of language, etc. <u>Sources:</u> E.g., Oxford children's Reference Library Vol.9 (Stories told Round the World).

SCHEME OF WORK (12 WEEKS ONE LESSON A WEEK)(Cont.)

WEEK	TOPIC	DETAILS
5	Songs of Malawi	Worksongs; hunters, pounding, etc. Maniage, dances, etc. Meanings and Reasons for singing.
6	Songs of Malawi (Cont.)	Specific examples; Beni, Chopi, Malipenga, etc. Origin, who performs, when, why, what drums, singers. Examine some songs (in English translation): do they look poetic? Are there poetic devices?
7	Ballads from England, Scotland etc.	Oral origins, folksingers, printing, broadsides etc. Messages in ballads not different from African songs.
8	Ballads and songs	Specific examples, a Scottish ballad (e.g. "Lord Randal") in modern English, song from the set book (e.g. No. 9). etc.
9	Drama	Discuss aspects of drama linked to ritual and initiation songs, dance songs, etc. Costumes, standards of performance, audience participation etc. What is the aim? Refer to other plays in pupils' experience, e.g. ATEM Drama Festival.

SCHEME OF WORK (12 WEEKS ONE LESSON A WEEK)(Cont.)

WEEK	TOPIC	DETAILS
10	Compension of Oral and Written Forms.	Oral: Spontaneous, facial expression, gestures, voice, role of audience, sometimes ungrammatical. What is involved in putting a story, song, etc. into writing, on a page.
11	Problems of translation.	African writers may use English differently from Englishmen. Cultural assumption of some words in different languages. Nonsense words, ideophones, language rhythms.
12	Revision	Roots of Literature lie in Oral traditions. The raw material, unrefined by any of the processed of written literature, is present in the songs, stories, ritual charts, etc. known to the pupils (or certainly to their parents).

FOOTNOTES

1. Hanson, J.W. Education and the Development of Nations (1966) article "Education Tasks for a Developing Nation."
2. Mason R.J. British Education in Africa 1959 p 1.
3. Curle (1963) p xiii.
4. Handout, Education & Culture, May, 1976
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5. From Teachers' Notes for Junior Certificate Literature English Syllabus. 1979.
6. A T E M Vol. 1. 1980 p 19.
7. Jones, E.D. (1975) p 31.
8. Duerden, D. and Pieterse (1972) p 123.
9. Moody (1971) p 18.
10. All references in the last Section of Chapter IV i.e. "Attitude Towards the Teaching of English Literature at Junior Certificate level in Malawi" are taken from the Association of Teachers of English in Malawi (ATEM) Newsletter Vol.1.1980 pages 11 - 32.

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